

U. S. ARMY CHAPLAIN SCHOOL  
WRITING REQUIREMENT

THE ARMY CORRECTIONAL CHAPLAIN

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## INTRODUCTION

There have been few areas where theory and practice have been further apart than in the assigning of chaplains to correctional institutions. My own experience as well as the experience of many others testify to this truth.

After having been on active duty a whole sum total of two months I was given the task of being the chaplain for more than five hundred inmates who were crowded into a two hundred and seventy-five man facility. My only special instruction was that it "would be a real opportunity for me."

In spite of the odds against it, it was a good assignment. Hindsight has shown me countless areas where I was a total failure. But, thanks to God, there were enough successes to rank it among the most meaningful of all my assignments.

The real tragedy is that for so many, the poor manner in which correctional chaplains are chosen results in a disservice both to the inmate and also to the Army. By the time the chaplain finally learns what it is all about, it is usually time for him to be transferred to other assignments.

The Chief-of-Chaplains has not only recognized the problem but also sought to correct the situation by stating that only men with adequate training would be assigned to

correctional facilities.<sup>1</sup> This is also a matter of concern to the Provost Marshal who has also expressed similar ideas. Every effort should be made to insure that these policies become standard operating procedure.

Field Manual 16-5 says very little about the training or function of the chaplain within the community of the confined. He is described as "a foremost exponent of rehabilitation."<sup>2</sup> If he is to fill such an important role it only seems right that he be afforded the best possible training the Army has before he launches out into this field of endeavor.

A great deal more will be said about the confinement facility chaplain's preparation. I consider it important enough to rate an entire section.

The role of the correctional chaplain must change for two reasons. First, he cannot continue to function with such an ill-defined mission and ever have a good criterion to evaluate his effectiveness. The second reason is that the entire field of corrections is undergoing tremendous changes. The chaplain must not only know about it but, as he has in some situations, be the agent for change. The current director of the corrections department in one of the states

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<sup>1</sup>This concept was expressed by CH (Major General) Gerhardt W. Hyatt in a private conversation with CH (Major) Paul O. Forsberg.

<sup>2</sup>Army Field Manual 16-5, Chapter 6 Sec. II Para. 6-6 (Department of the Army, 1967) p. 33.

which is leading the way in innovations in the field is a former minister.<sup>3</sup>

Actually the federal government which serves as a leader in this regard started a ten year program in late 1969 to improve the federal prisons.<sup>4</sup> The correctional facilities within the Army have also been included in this program. Recent innovations at the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas include such things as a Temporary Parole Program, Work Release Program, a Jaycee Chapter and community based activities in religion, education and mental health.<sup>5</sup> The Army chaplain assigned within a correctional facility must be aware of and involved in all that is happening within this field. Recently charges were brought against certain correctional facilities alleging that inmates were refused opportunities to fully practice their religion.<sup>6</sup>

Another factor calling for a restudy of the chaplain's role is the inmate himself. In recent years a philosophy known as the Black Social Ethic or the Black Political Move-

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<sup>3</sup>George Beto of the Texas Department of Corrections.

<sup>4</sup>Nick Thimmesch, "New Prison Construction Needed", Macon Telegraph, Dec. 29, 1972, Sec. B, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Paul O. Forsberg, "Introductory Letter," The Military Chaplain in a Correctional Institution, Staff Chaplain Section, (United States Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 4 May 1972), Introduction, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>"Service Prisons Rapped," Army Times, Dec. 27, 1972, p. 16.

ment has been strong among the inmate population. Basically this philosophy would remove any guilt from the individual and place the blame upon the society which has produced him. Unfortunately the correctional facilities up to this time have in many cases served to reinforce this philosophy. Some forty per cent of inmates in United States prisons are black, but only five per cent of the guards are black. Attorney General Kleindienst says, "There is nothing more calculated to reassure the black inmate that he has been victimized than a sea of white faces among prison guards. He deserves and his program of rehabilitation deserves something more than this crude and insensitive black-and-white polarization."<sup>7</sup> Another step to aid in the solution of this problem has been the institution of Black Studies at the Disciplinary Barracks.

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<sup>7</sup>Thimmesch, "Prison Construction," p. 5.

## I. THE CORRECTIONAL TEAM

The correctional facility chaplain can only be as effective in his role as a rehabilitation agent as the total institutional team. He must have some understanding of what the other members are trying to accomplish and also the struggles and frustrations they face in trying to do their job. While he is primarily assigned to minister to the inmates he must never forget that the other members of the correctional team often need his ministry as badly as the inmates.

Leading the list of those with whom the chaplain must work closely are those within the command structure of the facility, especially the correctional facility commander. Upon his shoulders rest the burdens of rehabilitation, security, and administration. He is frequently a lonely man. Not only must the chaplain be aware of his need for command support but he must also be keenly conscious of the commander's need of him as a spiritual advisor.

Proper administration is essential. The administrative staff can furnish the chaplain with information which in some cases would never be available to him through any other channels.

Those within this section are the clerks and other specialists who are usually located in the proverbial "front-office."

A third group of people with whom the correctional facility chaplain must maintain close contact are those I've chosen to describe as the special staff. Every facility will differ as to the people that constitute this staff. The way each functions will also vary from one facility to another. Some of those included in this group are the mental hygiene representatives, the medical personnel, lawyers, those working in the vocational training section, and those who administer the various educational programs within the facility. This is also the group to which the chaplain belongs.

In many small as well as large facilities the chaplain will find himself working very closely with the mental hygiene representatives. These include psychiatrists, psychologists, and other trained specialists. These people can be a valuable resource for referral when the chaplain recognizes that the inmates' problems may be more severe than he feels he is competent to handle. Working closely with this group will be those from the social work department. Each of these render a valuable service to the inmate. As the chaplain becomes more aware of the contributions of each, he will be freer to invest more of his time in the area of ministering to the spiritual needs of the inmates.

Another group with whom the chaplain would do well to cultivate a good relationship is the lawyers. These men can be tremendously valuable in answering many of the questions



which arise each day. If there is any place where the rumor mill works overtime in cranking out false ideas it is in a correctional facility. The chaplain, once he has gained their trust and confidence, can be of tremendous value in removing many of the unfounded fears experienced by so many of the inmates; especially the first-termers who have only been in the facility a short time.

For many years, about the only lawyers the inmate came in contact with were those charged with the responsibility of prosecuting or defending him. However, with the new emphasis on rehabilitation, some of the facilities are utilizing lawyers to help inmates solve many of the legal entanglements in which they seem to become so easily involved. This is probably one of the best steps that has been taken in a long time. It is common knowledge that neither the chaplain nor anyone else is going to help the inmate with his problems until someone is willing to take the time to listen.

Still another group with whom the chaplain should be familiar are those within the Vocational Training Branch. Theirs is a big task as they try to determine the potential of each inmate and then construct a program in which he can be profitably involved. For a while this program was available only in the larger facilities but now Vocational Training is part of the inmates life almost from the time he first enters. Those charged with this task will welcome the

recommendations of the chaplain.

Closely associated with the vocational training team are those who are charged with the responsibility of administering the educational program for the inmates. Their biggest problem is often the point where the chaplain can be of the greatest value. Not all inmates have a great deal of motivation for educational pursuits. While there are extremes at both ends, the average education attainment of inmates is somewhere near the tenth grade level. It is obvious that few groups of people could profit more from what the educational team offers than could the inmates within a correctional facility. The chaplain can often be the key person to offer the encouragement which is needed to help the inmate get started in this field of work.

I have discussed the chaplains relationship with the command section, the administrative staff and also the members of the special staff sections. There is also another group about which I feel very strongly. These are the cadre. Far too often the chaplain will find himself at odds with these men who have such a difficult task. The chaplain should never feel that the mission of these men is contrary to his. Of all groups of people, I suppose the cadre within a correctional facility are the most often neglected by the chaplain. However, there are probably no two groups who need each other more. The chaplain who tries to function without

the counsel and helpful hints from the cadre will be handicapped. These men know what goes on within the life of a correctional facility. When the cadre have learned to trust and respect the chaplain they will keep him better informed than would some staff briefings.

The chaplain who is sensitive to the cadre will soon learn that they too are often people with severe problems. Because of the image which their job creates for them it is not always easy to establish the trust and rapport essential to a team effort.

There is a fifth group. They are not always a part of the military family. I am referring to the various civilian organizations which have sought to aid in the rehabilitation and in many cases the reestablishment of the inmates within a caring community.

Attorney General Kleindienst is especially high on these volunteer efforts to help inmates. The Junior Chamber of Commerce currently has 250 prison chapters, with 13,000 dues-paying members inside, and thousands of Jaycees on the outside going to bat for them when they get out.<sup>8</sup> Such a chapter is part of the innovative programs currently in effect at the Disciplinary Barracks.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Forsberg, Military Chaplain, p. 1.

The chaplain is often the best link between those civilian organizations who are sincerely interested in helping the inmates and the military structure. All the chaplain can do to help inmates maintain ties with the community outside the correctional facility will be worthwhile. This includes his military unit as well as the civilian community.

I have named many of those with whom the chaplain will be working as a fellow team member. His understanding of and appreciation for these other members will enhance his own effectiveness in working toward the goal of assisting inmates to be able to help themselves.

As it is important for the chaplain to know what the other team members are doing, it is also important for them to know how the chaplain functions on the team. The chaplain should utilize every opportunity to share with others those particular concerns and interest which are of particular importance to him. It is to that subject that the next section of the paper is devoted.

## II. THE CHAPLAIN AND HIS MINISTRY

The duties of chaplains are spelled out in Army Regulation 165-20. This regulation states that the primary mission of the chaplain is to provide for the religious and moral needs of his people.<sup>10</sup> Though the chaplain should feel closely allied to the other helping teams and programs within the facility, his own distinct role as a man of God must remain clear. His concern is spiritual and deals with his parishioner's relationship with God. He must remain, whatever the situation, a pastor and spiritual shepherd.<sup>11</sup>

How he does this is the subject of this chapter. Included in the correctional chaplain's functions are practically the same functions found in any religious program. He conducts religious services, performs the sacraments, rites and ordinances that are a part of his denominational requirements, visits, counsels, teaches, and coordinates. However, the big difference is how and where he does these things.

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<sup>10</sup>Army Regulation 165-20, Sec. II para. 4, Department of the Army (Washington D.C., 18 May 1966), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Forsberg, Military Chaplain, pp. 28-29.

The chaplain within any facility, large or small, is charged with the mission of providing for the worship needs of all his people. Naturally he will conduct the services for his own major faith group. He must also be very sensitive to the needs of other faith groups and work diligently to see that they also have ample opportunities to worship. In recent years some new religious groups have come on the scene. They should be recognized and provided for. The chaplain does this by drawing on other resources within the military family and also utilizing resources available within the civilian community.

Two high-ranking federal prison officials including the director of chaplaincy services were recently cited in Atlanta for refusing to carry out a judge's order to have the Church of the New Song recognized as a religious group in Federal prisons.<sup>12</sup>

In the performing of his own service much care should go into the preparation of each sermon. Inmates are a special group of men with specific needs which should be addressed from the Word of God. No small amount of time will be utilized in the preparation of each sermon and the order of each worship service if they are to be effective. As he becomes more aware of the needs of inmates he will be better able to bring the Word of God to

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<sup>12</sup>"A Religious Group in Prison Backed," New York Times, January 24, 1973. Sec. A, p. L25.

life in each of them.

His preaching, and all that he does within the context of the worship service should be done with the goal of bringing the inmates to God and God to the inmates. This is more than a motto.

In some cases the opportunity to have additional services for the cadre and other staff personnel may be present. This also will require special preparation.

A good visitation program is essential within the correctional facility. There will usually always be inmates that are in the hospital or else being kept in the dispensary for some physical problem. Another group that should rate high on the list of priorities is the inmates within the maximum security section. They will usually be housed in isolated cells where they have little contact with others except at meals and exercise periods.

It is also a good policy to visit the cell blocks from time to time. Inmates need to know that the chaplain is familiar with the conditions under which they live.

Still another place where the chaplain can be of value is during periods of family visitation. There are times when the chaplain will be asked to counsel family members. This is a good opportunity to render a valuable service.

This leads to another vital ministry of the correctional facility chaplain and that is his counseling. As each

inmate comes into the facility he will have his initial interview with the chaplain. It is here that the chaplain can be of tremendous help if he understands the fear and frustration that are part of the inmates life. These sessions should not be rushed. That which is given by the inmate as privileged communication should be treated as such. It is not uncommon for the inmate to "bait" the chaplain with some bit of information just to see if he is sincere in his plans to keep confidential material private.

There is also the necessity to keep good records on each inmate. The chaplain, as part of the team, must make recommendations on each inmate and should not rely on his memory. I have found it a good practice to share with the inmate ahead of time any recommendations which I'm going to make regarding his future. The initial interview is where the file on the inmate is constructed.

Many times during an inmate's confinement he will have the opportunity to see the chaplain. He may request to see the chaplain by filling out a request form for this purpose. At other times cadre members will recommend to the chaplain that he see one of the men. Anytime an inmate receives a death notification, or is informed of the serious illness of a family member, the chaplain should be there. Also when a "Dear John" is received by one of the men from his wife the chaplain should be on hand.



The chaplain should strive to do his best job of counseling at the time of the inmate's departure from the facility. Whether he is returning to duty or civilian life some help should be given him for acculturation. A released inmate wrote to the Chaplain Section of the Disciplinary Barracks and said, "People out here are hard for me to get used to. They still play games."<sup>13</sup> The road back for an inmate is never an easy one and he will need all the spiritual counsel he can get as he continues to work out the process.

A fourth function of the chaplain is that of being a teacher. He will be the teacher in not only religion, but also many of the topics that would best be described as moral heritage subjects. Every effort should be made to deal with the subjects that are of interest and importance to the inmates such as marriage and the family, how to get along with others and other such topics. There will be times when the chaplain may feel the need to develop his own topic based on a specific need. A chaplain serving in a post correctional facility has said, "When a person's emotional and social attitudes and behavior are immature, his religious attitudes and expressions are very often immature as well."<sup>14</sup> The chaplain is a teacher. More will

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<sup>13</sup>Forsberg, Military Chaplain, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>John N. Peterson, "Counseling and Chaplain Program," Confinement Facility, (Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Mar. 1969 - Feb. 1970), p. 10.

be said about the chaplain's role as a teacher in the discussion on utilization of the group technique.

A fifth function of the chaplain is one which has already been dealt with to some extent. And that is his cooperation and coordination with other staff members. I have listed it here for it is something which must not be assumed but worked at if it is to be accomplished. Because of the failure on the part of the other staff members in understanding the chaplain's role it will often be his initiative in coordinating and cooperating that will make it possible.

It is obvious that the program which I've outlined would be near impossible for one man to do well. However, there is a way whereby many more can be helped if it is used effectively. I am referring to the group technique. There are certain types of counseling which are done much better by the group method than on a one-to-one basis. Through the interaction of the group process the inmate often discovers his personhood. Teaching is also more meaningful to the inmate if it is done by a group process.

A word of caution must be registered at this point. The group process is not to take the emphasis away from the individual person. "The chaplain's mission is a person-centered ministry and his primary task is to know the inmate. Individual human relationships are the focal point

of concern. The chaplain is there to help men, to relate to them, to lead them to God."<sup>15</sup> The use of the group is not in contradiction to this but is rather a means whereby it can be done more effectively. Inmates must always be considered as individual cases rather than as a group of men of simular characteristics.<sup>16</sup>

As the chaplain begins group counseling sessions he must decide what men he can help and under what circumstances. He must then determine exactly what he hopes to accomplish. He will be influenced by the degree to which he perceives each inmate and the nature of his own relationship with him.<sup>17</sup> "The religious group under the direction of the chaplain, strives to achieve a balance in which individual needs, as well as collective productivity, may be satisfied. The opinions and attitudes of the group toward ethical and spiritual issues will seldom be unanimous. Individual variation and divergent notions must be allowed."<sup>18</sup>

In a prison in New Jersey, a group of inmates, most of whom were black and all of whom were former drug addicts, renamed their housing unit "Exodus House." Through formal education, group therapy, psychological counseling and

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<sup>15</sup>Forsberg, Military Chaplain, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Field Manual 16-5, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>Forsberg, Military Chaplain, p.21.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

systematic self-criticism and peer-criticism they are attempting to prepare themselves to go back into and deal with the form of life out of which they came.<sup>19</sup> This is one example of the use of group therapy.

Howard Clinebell indicates that group counseling constitutes the most promising resource for major creative advances in pastoral care and is the key to broadening a chapel program's caring ministry.<sup>20</sup> A primary reason for the group approach is that it enables the chaplain to serve more persons in less time as well as enabling him to serve a few over a longer duration of time. The emotional climate of a group should be such that it would afford freedom, with others, to be what one is, to feel what one feels, and to communicate what one really feels and thinks.<sup>21</sup> The group should provide the inmate with a peer group in which he can have corrective experiences.

The chaplain working as a member of the group must be able to accept each group member as an individual and not just as another inmate. Carl Rogers suggest a model which I feel is a good one for the chaplain. He says, "I tend to

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<sup>19</sup>Fred Ferretti, "Despite Reforms in Prisons, Problems Persist in Jersey," New York Times, Feb. 2, 1973, Sec. A, p.L33.

<sup>20</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling, Abingdon Press, (New York, 1966) p. 206.

<sup>21</sup>Joseph W. Knowles. Group Counseling, Fortress Press (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1964), p. 19.

accept statements at their face value. As a facilitator I definitely prefer to be a gullible person; I will believe that you are telling me the way it is in you. I do not want to waste my time being suspicious, or wondering, 'What does he really mean?'"<sup>22</sup> If the inmate has been less than honest in a group, the chances are good that, if he stays in the group, he will correct the dishonesty himself.

If the correctional facility chaplain has not had the opportunity to learn how to structure a group he should invest some time and effort to do so. It will be one of the most effective tools he has in carrying out his mission of ministering to the spiritual needs of the inmates.

In the next section the preparation which the chaplain needs will be discussed.

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<sup>22</sup>Carl R. Rogers, Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups, Harper and Row Publishers (New York, 1970), p. 50.

### III. THE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY CHAPLAIN'S PREPARATION

In preparing oneself for a ministry in a correctional facility there are several aspects to consider. Those I shall discuss are his spiritual preparation, intellectual or education preparation, his intrapersonal understandings and awareness, and his interpersonal relationships.

In all of those areas the chaplain's preparation has to be an ongoing process. The tools he will bring to the task will constantly be in need of sharpening because of their constant use.

The chaplain must have a sense of mission from God. He must be prepared spiritually for each day's encounter. This means that not only should there be a definite spiritual commitment to the task, but there must also be daily renewal of that commitment through meditation and prayer. If the chaplain does not have a spiritual ministry with the inmates, he has no ministry at all.

The second aspect of his preparation has to do with his intellectual and educational assets. He should be first and foremost a student of theology. He functions as a man of God and he cannot be that unless he works at relating God's resources to man's needs. He will also need to have

an understanding of people. This will include some training in the field of psychology. His aim in being a student of psychology should be to make him aware of the ways by which he can make his ministry the most effective.

A third area of preparation has to do with the chaplain's understanding of himself. There is a need for him to understand his own attitudes and feelings. This is especially true as he relates himself to the inmates. How does he feel about inmates? What are his attitudes toward their rehabilitation? These are only two of the many questions which must be answered if the chaplain is going to realize his maximum effectiveness.

How he does this is not an easy question to answer. Naturally, there must be a constant self evaluation. Probably the best way to gain this type of self understanding is by being a member of an encounter group where these type attitudes can surface and be dealt with within a concerned community. Clinebell says, "The most efficient way of increasing one's ability as a creative leader or a group counselor is participation in a sensitivity training or therapy group."<sup>23</sup> The more insight one can gain into his own functioning the better he will be able to help others in understanding themselves.

The last type of preparation involves his understanding of his own interpersonal relationships. This

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<sup>23</sup>Clinebell, Pastoral Counseling, p. 209.

simply means, how he comes across to others, especially inmates. Does the concern which he professes really come across to others? How can it be made even more real to the inmates? These questions should be asked and answered by the chaplain. How one perceives himself and how others perceive him can be and often is very different. While the chaplain can not expect to ever get the two images right together, he certainly must know where the differences are and function from that awareness.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would like to suggest that the correctional facility chaplain do three things. He should prepare for changes within the correctional system, he should be the initiator of the changes where he can, and he should be constantly looking to the future and not allow himself to become overly depressed at the system as he may find it.

As was indicated in the introduction the whole system of corrections is in a state of change. New facilities are being constructed in many communities outside the military.<sup>24</sup> Within the military there is also much innovation taking place. The need for people to try new ideas is here. The time is now. The federal government will be starting new programs and questioning many of the old ways. The challenge is to be prepared to keep in step with the changes as they do come.

The chaplain, however, should not be content to sit back and be dragged along by the changes. Rather he should be the pace setter. Far too often the chaplain has been

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<sup>24</sup>Joe Ledlie, "Jails Begin Entering A New Era", Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Dec. 31, 1972, Sec.A, p. 3.

among the last to offer suggestions as to how the system could be improved. Those charged with the responsibility of commanding a correctional facility will not only welcome new ideas but also be very grateful to have one on their staff who is interested enough to work at improving the system. You may have to sell them on your ideas but at least you are working at improvements.

After what all has been said, the challenge to the correctional facility chaplain is to get on with the job in the present so that the future for the inmates as well as the facility staff will have promise of an even more effective program.

This paper has not been written for the chaplains at the large facilities such as the Disciplinary Barracks but rather for that new chaplain who, is faced with ministering to so many inmates and feels so inadequate for the task. I wish that as I had started out in my assignment as a correctional facility chaplain someone had given me such a paper.

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